DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 046 351 HE 001 941

AUTHOR	Nyquist, Ewald B.
TITLE	The Idea of the University of the State of New York.
INSTITUTION	New York State Education Dept., Albany.
PUB DATE	15 Sep 70
NOTE	12p.; Inaugural Address at the 93rd Convocation of the University of the State of New York, September 15, 1970
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	*Administrative Organization, Educational Opportunities, Governing Boards, *Higher Education, *Objectives, *State Universities
IDENTIFIERS	*New York State University

ABSTRACT

The University of the State of New York is unique in the Union and the oldest continuous State educational administrative agency in America. It is a university without walls, it has no employed faculty and no matriculated students; yet all students and all faculty in New York State are integral parts of it. There are many advantages and some shortcomings to the New York pattern, which include, on the one hand, the authority lodged in the Board of Regents to plan, coordinate, supervise and evaluate all of the educational resources under its aegis; and on the other, the failure to utilize the full potential of the System. The University has 3 goals: (1) to enlarge educational opportunity for all the people in the State; (2) to provide the best possible quality in education; and (3) to do all this with efficiency and economy. To accomplish these goals a more flexible, open and diversified system of post-secondary education will have to be created, techniques will have to be developed to award undergraduate degrees to those with the knowledge and ability equivalent to those degrees but without the formal education, and the System will have to become more humanistic and less depersonalized. (AF)

ED046351

THE IDEA OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Inaugural Address of

EWALD B. NYQUIST

President of the University
of the State of New York
and
Commissioner of Education

THE NINETY-THIRD CONVOCATION

September 15, 1970

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Albany

HE001941

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Regents of the University ***(with years when terms expire)***

1984 JOSEPH W. MCGOVERN, A.B., LL.B., L.H.D., LL.D., D.C.L.,
Chancellor - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - New York

1985 EVERETT J. PENNY, B.C.S., D.C.S.,
Vice Chancellor - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - White Plains

1978 ALEXANDER J. ALLAN, JR., LL.D., Litt.D. - - - - - - - - Troy

1973 CHARLES W. MILLARD, JR., A.B., LL.D., L.H.D. - - - - - - Buffalo

1972 CARL H. PFORZHEIMER, JR., A.B., M.B.A., D.C.S., H.H.D. - Purchase

1975 EDWARD M. M. WARBURG, B.S., L.H.D. - - - - - - - - - New York

1977 JOSEPH T. KING, LL.B. - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Queens

1974 JOSEPH C. INDELICATO, M.D. - - - - - - - - - - - - Brooklyn

1976 MRS. HELEN B. POWER, A.B., Litt.D., L.H.D. - - - - - - - Rochester

1979 FRANCIS W. MCGINLEY, B.S., LL.B., LL.D. - - - - - - - Glens Falls

1980 MAX J. RUBIN, LL.B., L.H.D. - - - - - - - - - - - - New York

1971 KENNETH B. CLARK, A.B., M.S., Ph.D., Litt.D. - - - - - - Hastings on Hudson

1982 STEPHEN K. BAILEY, A.B., B.A., M.A., Ph.D., LL.D. - - - - Syracuse

1983 HAROLD E. NEWCOMB, B.A. - - - - - - - - - - - - - Owego

1981 THEODORE M. BLACK, A.B. - - - - - - - - - - - - - Sands Point

President of the University and Commissioner of Education
EWALD B. NYQUIST

Executive Deputy Commissioner of Education
GORDON M. AMBACH

ED0 46351

THE IDEA OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Inaugural Address
of
Ewald B. Nyquist
President of The University of the State of New York
and Commissioner of Education

Governor Rockefeller, Chancellor McGovern, Regents, Reverend Clergy, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen — Friends, all:

This 93d Convocation of The University of the State of New York is a tribute to a radical concept of educational organization and governance. I shall speak briefly to the idea of The University of the State of New York. For it is within the richness of this concept that we can point with pride to the educational accomplishments of the past, bear witness to what we already have, and build with confidence for our future development. It is fitting and proper that, from time to time, we refresh our memories, reinterpret our heritage, and renew our faith in the seminal ideas that have influenced and shaped the development of education in this State.

One hundred eighty-six years ago, a mere few months after the achievement of American independence from England, the young commonwealth of New York undertook to create a statewide system of education under the name of The University of the State of New York.

Differing visions of society and education influenced the making of the law which created The University. There were significant divisions among men like Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, Aaron Burr, and Governor George Clinton.

The University was a product of French ideologies and British politics, of the revolutionary thought of the Enlightenment, the brilliant theories that formed the intellectual justification for both the American and French Revolutions. Just as the political revolutions overthrew the old regimes, The University was established to create a system of education free from all the old traditions. Revolution, it has been said, is simply the result of an old society pregnant with a new one.

The University of the State of New York was finally conceived as a universal and centralized system of education, yet one with a diversified educational power base which would permit and encourage the establishment of a mixed economy of public and private institutions. It would, to quote John Jay, provide education "for all ranks of people . . . at a cheap and eas rate."

It was totally different from the church-dominated patterns of education characteristic of the other former colonies and of the English educational system which had served as their model. Even so, the idea of a unified educational system under state control, and the term "University" to express this conception, were of French origin and were advocated by radical French philosophers during the last half of the 18th century. Ironically, it antedates by 25 years the comparable French national system of education organized under the title of The University of France.

This system, headed by the Board of Regents, and whose administrative arm is the State Education Department, is unique in the Union, and is the oldest continuous State educational administrative agency in America. Its noble general purpose is to enlarge and improve educational, professional, and cultural opportunities in New York State, though, parenthetically, its incorporating powers and accrediting activities extend to other states and nations. The University comprises all the private and public colleges in the State, as well as private, public, and parochial schools, museums, historical societies, libraries, and other kinds of educational institutions and agencies.

The institutions of The University reflect an inordinately rich educational spectrum. The State is the campus of The University. It is a university without walls. It has no employed faculty and no matriculated students — yet, all students of every age and all teachers, in a meaningful sense, are integral parts of it. It is designed to take the most furthest and the best highest. It is the overarching constitutional concept giving orderliness, coherence, direction, and character to the educational enterprise of the State.

It was the product of the most advanced thought of the times in which it was established. Although the basic principles of New York's system of education have been copied many times over the years, it remains *sui generis* in the United States.

Even though it took many years for The University to evolve into a truly comprehensive system of education, the fundamental principle of the New York State system has always been that the education of free men in a free society is the most important function of government. For this reason, the State Constitution guarantees the existence of The University of the State of New York as a separate, nonpolitical corpo-

rate entity. It has the protective autonomy of constitutional status. It symbolizes the seriousness with which education has traditionally been viewed by our citizens and by our political leaders.

It is a seamless domestic dispensation joined together by comity and by law. It and its institutions are a calculated interdependence. Yet, we believe with Robert Frost that the separateness of the parts is at least as important as the connection of the parts. There are, indeed, honorable " spaces in our togetherness."

But, it is the spirit and not the machinery that ultimately binds us together.

Although in another 14 years it will be 200 years old, it has retained its contemporary relevance. If it is to continue to do so, its corporate life-style must be one of mutual cooperation and trust, bold confrontation with the virile social and educational issues of the day, innovation, and the exercise of critical judgment. It must value creative service and constructive change above ministerial and regulatory functions; the use of persuasion rather than power, consultation rather than compulsion, initiative and, therefore, the domination of change, rather than reaction to it, seeking the right result over following the right procedure, experimentation rather than the preservation of the status quo.

Is this too high to aim? We cannot reach for less if The University is to serve its purpose.

There are many advantages to this New York pattern. It lodges in one agency — the Regents — the authority to plan, coordinate, supervise, and evaluate all of the educational resources under their aegis, thus enabling it to marshall the exceptional resources of a gifted State, wisely and efficiently; it provides protection against political partisanship and vested interests, while through its lay Board of Regents, it act as a conscience of education and serves as a bridge between the Department and the public, interpreting each to the other. It furnishes an instrument for uniting common interests and bridging differences in the diversity of education; it can identify priorities in educational needs and interpret them with high public visibility; it can provide a necessary balance of strengths within an enlarging three-way federal-state-local partnership and furnish the leadership for creative interplay between them.

Its only weakness may well be the failure to realize the full potential inherent in its legal structure.

There are, of course, shortcomings in our execution. Constructive criticism from the public and the educational community helps us to be sensitive to them and to seek repair of our deficiencies. And we constantly keep in mind Sir Eric Ashby's dictum, that an organization is the embodiment of an ideal and to survive it must fulfill two condi-

tions: It must be sufficiently stable to sustain the ideal which gave it birth; and sufficiently responsive to remain relevant to the society which supports it. Reverence for one's symbols, then, combined with fearlessness of revision, are the keys to self-renewal.

We come, then, to the goals and ideals of The University of the State of New York. Its goals are three:

To enlarge educational opportunity for the people of this State, each according to his interests and abilities; to provide the best possible quality in education, mindful that excellence has no ceiling; and to see to it that all of this is accomplished with efficiency and economy.

The ideals of The University are, in John Gardner's paraphrased words, the liberation of the human spirit, the release of human potential, and the enhancement and celebration of individual human dignity.

This is high-risk idealism — for we have promises to keep, pledges to redeem, and miles to go in a society tending to become unglued and one characterized by dissent and rising expectations which, unhappily, are out-distancing sluggish social institutions. Warren Bennis of The State University at Buffalo calls our attention to a marvelous Peruvian word, *arribismo,* meaning an unbridled desire to rise. It is characteristic of people we have ignored or treated inequitably in the past: the young, the poor, the Black, the Puerto Rican — and, yes, unliberated women, too.

With these goals and ideals in mind, one can identify specific objectives for accomplishment in education in the 1970's. My list is a long and heavy agenda for constructive change and valid reform. But I should like to discuss just two. These are highly interrelated and an admixture of attitude and concept.

First, I express the strong view that we must consider all of the educational resources within the State, both formal and informal, as constituting the living current reality of The University of the State of New York. Taking account of this macro-educational system gives new life to an old term. Several supportive statements are in order:

First, it means that every high school graduate or person with a high school diploma or the equivalent should have an equal opportunity for postsecondary education. It emphasizes equal access to postsecondary education, not universal higher education attendance.

Secondary, postsecondary education does not mean just the usual formal college and university baccalaureate or graduate degree programs. It means all kinds of trade, technical, semi-professional programs and institutions, whether they are nonprofit or proprietary. We must give increased status to these worthy programs and increased emphasis to the notion that not everyone needs to go on to a bachelor of arts degree. Degrees, now a common currency, are only a sign that

a person is not intellectually inadequate. A collegiate education is not the only avenue to quality in education or to financially and intellectually rewarding lives.

Thirdly, equal opportunity does not mean the same type or length of education for everyone. Aristotle said that true equality consists in treating unequal talents unequally. In our society there is a democracy of talent as well as one of excellence. A great variety of talent is necessary to make it work. It depends upon a highly diversified range of decisionmaking. Differing interests and abilities require differing programs, and we need to expand the diversity of the opportunities we already have, not narrow them to a few limited collegiate patterns.

Fourthly, we need to take a view of open admissions which places no rigid time limit as to when the aspiring and capable high school student or graduate can exercise his option for postsecondary opportunity or when he can complete it.

I look for a more flexible and open system of education with increased opportunity for students to participate in any program at any level at which they are capable of performing, for each student to proceed at his own pace. We need, too, more honorable forms of educational entry, exit, and reentry, to create more socially approved channels for interrupting and resuming education, that will permit people, young and old, to work in and out of an educational setting as their interests and circumstances dictate. Necessary, too, are increased emphasis on independent study, more accommodating transfer policies between differing types of educational agencies, and less indulgence in the narcissism of small differences.

We shall see, increasingly, then, three marked changes in postsecondary education: First, compensatory education, meaning extra counseling, tutoring, and remedial instruction, in our colleges and universities for those who seek a formal college education, but who have deficiencies in their precollege education; secondly, a loosening-up of the requirement that a student must finish his formal education in a lock-step prescribed calendar of 2 or 4 years; thirdly, growing recognition that there are other postsecondary roads to success and self-fulfillment besides our formal collegiate institutions.

Increasingly we shall see that the need and right of every young person to realize his or her potential through postsecondary education is accepted as vital to the public interest. But we have more to do to see to it that our system is "free and open and compassionate and non-racist and productive." We must go one step further in this new conception of The University of the State of New York.

The informal motto of The University of the State of New York is, Unity with Diversity. So far we have considered that diversity to encompass only the usual formal educational establishments. We need to make the most of the potential of The University of the State of New York by including, through creative interplay and new arrangements, all educational activity and enterprises in the State.

One belief of mine is that we must not confuse learning with education or education with schooling. From the moment an individual is born, and perhaps even before, he is learning and continues, or should continue, to learn throughout life. Some part of what he learns is the result of efforts by others to help or impel him to learn, and only some part of that effort takes place in schools and colleges. It may be that in the future we will need to give to the schools and colleges very different parts of that effort than we have in the past. All of us in education must examine our roles and the roles of our institutions in relation to the changing learning needs of people and society.

It is even possible that eventually education will become so integral to living that compulsory schooling will no longer be necessary. President Kingman Brewster of Yale University said recently that the vitality of higher education requires voluntary students. Perhaps the same is true at all levels.

Much progress has been made in breaking away from traditional oncampus, one-institution, avenues to degree work. More remains to be done.

Today our Nation and our State place a greater premium upon higher education than at any time in their history. Because of the growing complexity of life in a technologically oriented society, this emphasis is understandable and laudable.

Our colleges and universities, however, primarily serve those who are able to spend a number of years in residence in obtaining a college degree. There are thousands of people — men and women of all ages, social classes, and walks of life — who contribute in important ways to the life of the communities in which they live, without benefit of a college degree. Through intelligence, hard work, and sacrifice, many have gained in knowledge and understanding, developed and expanded their cultural and aesthetic horizons, and thus have become significant contributors to society. The Nation, and this State, have grown and prospered in the past because these people have been rewarded for what they know, rather than for how they learned it.

It is ironic that the social and economic mobility of these people is being threatened and thwarted today in part by the growing emphasis on the possession of credentials presumptively attesting to intellectual competence and acquisition of skills. We are a strongly " cre-

dentialed society." and it will be some time before employers will have the courage to hire people on the basis of what they know rather than on what degrees and diplomas they hold.

As college instruction has shifted to a central concern of society, and as a greater degree of education is required to operate economic, political, and social institutions in a postindustrial world that has shifted to a mental base, it is not surprising that increased attention should be paid to the formal credentials of those who aspire to positions of influence and power.

If attendance at a college is the only road to these credentials, however, those who cannot, or have not, availed themselves of this route, but have acquired knowledge and skills through other sources, will be denied the recognition and advancement to which they are entitled. Neither the State nor the Nation can afford such waste, nor should they tolerate such inequity. The costs of traditionalism are too high. Some formal and official means must be found to assess and to recognize the attainments of people who are either wholly or partly self-educated and who constitute an abundant, new nontraditional learning force in our society.

Confident that appropriate assessment techniques can be developed, I am proposing to the Board of Regents that The University of the State of New York award undergraduate degrees to those who are able to demonstrate that they possess knowledge and abilities equivalent to those of a degree recipient from a New York State college or university, regardless of how the candidates have prepared themselves. This is the European idea of the external degree.

Very much on my mind, then, is the need for what Martin Meyerson has called a new academic ethos of diversity and yet community; in short, the need to view our educational resources as a macro-educational system. It extends far beyond the formal educational agencies of schools and colleges. It includes television, radio, the church, extension divisions, research laboratories, performing arts centers, proprietary business, trade and technical schools, historical societies, public libraries, museums, correspondence study, VISTA, the Peace Corps, industrial, commercial, governmental, and military programs — and much more. As someone recently remarked, " there is a manifest need for linkages to unite this diffuse educational system," and I believe that in the concept of The University of the State of New York, we have the fertile grounds for doing so. In short, we need to make a *mesh* of things.

The Regents occupy a unique position in relation to education in the State and possess exceptional experience in the area of credit by

examination, and, of course, historically, have, themselves, awarded degrees to graduates of institutions under certain circumstances.

This carefully planned degree program, framed by distinguished scholars, will not place the State Education Department in competition with the colleges and universities of the State. The purpose of it is to serve those citizens who are, for whatever reason, unable to attend institutions of higher learning as resident students. Hopefully, success in this venture will stimulate New York's colleges and universities to use their great resources in expanding their own programs for the extension of educational opportunity.

This humane proposal, which will open up our educational system and create further options for our people, leads me naturally to my second related topic. I was recently asked what one thing I hope to accomplish as Commissioner of Education, if money were no consideration. With or without money, my single objective is to make the educational enterprise of this State more humanistic, and less depersonalized. I mean by this: Simply a way of looking at the world which emphasizes instead of money and things, the importance of man, his nature and central place in the universe; which teaches that all persons have dignity and worth, and that man was made just a little lower than the angels; studies that provide joy in learning, pleasure in creating, and a sense of self; programs that make a critical examination of the quality of life and society in the United States and what can be done about it; studies that lead to a repair of our ravaged environment and solve our social malignancies; that satisfy one's emotions and aspirations in an age of feeling and of a sensate culture; that lead to the development of a personal life-style, celebrate spontaneity, and make one fully human. We need to redress the value imbalances of a technological and materialistic society, with its emphasis on goods rather than the good things of life.

We are entering a period of romanticism with a distrust of, and rebellion against, pure rationality and which emphasizes that knowledge comes from experience, as well as the rational thought processes. I saw a cartoon recently which showed a young man in a mod suit sitting at a desk in the IBM Company. Behind him hung a sign: THINK — But groove a little. This says it all for me about the new Era of Romanticism and the Age of Aquarius.

Humanistic education means a lot of other things.

It means the training of teachers who have deep-seated expectations that every child can learn.

It means a racially integrated school system dedicated to the proposition that similarities among men are greater than differences, and

that difference is a source of richness and value rather than a thing to be feared and denied.

It means we must remind ourselves that man's highest aspiration is a cultural democracy, one in which there are highly developed and widespread ethical, aesthetic, and artistic sensitivities, where the arts are considered an essential grace in the lives of its people, and to recall George Bernard Shaw's dictum that, next to torture, art persuades fastest.

It means candor and publicized honesty about our weaknesses as well as our strengths in education and more willingness to provide accountability for our educational stewardship.

It means, for educational leaders, playing a collegial and consensual role, being authoritative, yet not authoritarian.

It means, when we deal with the young, as a great theologian has said, that the first duty of love is to listen, that God gave us two ears and one tongue and maybe they ought to be used in that proportion.

It means to recall, as a recent author stated, that in humane affairs — and education is a humane affair — there is no such thing as competence without love.

It means the rejection of repression from the left, as well as from the right in a society of uncoerced opinion, and that freedom is the exercise of responsible choice.

It means, as a notable scholar from Princeton has remarked, that we must teach the young how to lose once in a while and to search for ways to win again within the framework of organized social life.

To be humanistic means that while the unexamined life is not worth living, surely a life without laughter is not worth examining. Do we not need to learn how to laugh once again, and especially at ourselves, and remember with Mark Van Doren that a sense of humor is a sign in a man that he sees more sides of a thing that can be soberly and systematically stated?

It means the involvement of parents, students, and teachers in the decisionmaking process which affects them.

It means better understanding by the public that the price of education is an investment, and not a cost, and if it is a cost, that the cost of education is cheaper than the cost of ignorance.

It means defending against all comers, our colleges and universities as centers of independent thought and criticism and as basic creators of our society, yet as intellectual estates where uninhibited civilized discourse, free access to other minds, and respect for differences of opinion must prevail.

It means that we must look upon educational failure as a failure on the part of the school system, not the student or the parent, that stu-

dent performance must be linked with teacher performance and schools be judged by how they perform, not by what they promise.

It means curricular changes influenced by new departures in the manner and style of learning which may, as a Ford Foundation official has said, combine in many new ways, action and theory, production and analysis, performance and appreciation, feeling and thought, work and study, using the community as an educational adjunct. We are, indeed, " information-rich and action-poor " and need to be reminded of Alfred North Whitehead's dictum that celibacy does not suit a university: It must mate itself with action.

To be humanistic means, if constructive change is to be brought about, that we must find ways of wedding the passions of our times with reason, tempering feelings with reflection, modifying strong emotions with contemplation.

The University of the State of New York will celebrate its 200th anniversary in 1984. That year, indeed, is a marked year, one with a chilly Orwellian aura. I suggest that we work in mutual trust and harmony toward that year, clear in purpose and committed to reform, and make null and void the Orwellian forecast of conformity and coercion by keeping central in all we do the premise that the " individual human being is still the basic unit of value in the human condition."

With Thomas Jefferson, I like the dream of the future better than the history of the past.

I accept the responsibilities of Commissioner of Education and President of the University of the State of New York. I am proud to be in this place. I shall do my best.